

“Four Ways to Overcome Worldliness (Materialism)!”

Hebrews 13:5

Intro. – A headstone in an English village cemetery has the following inscription on it:

*Here lies a miser who lived for himself,
And cared for nothing but gathering pelf (ill gotten gains),
Now, where he is or how he fares,
Nobody knows and nobody cares.*

A Moscow father was complimenting another dad on his four sons. “You must be most proud,” he said, “One a peoples’ doctor, one a peoples’ lawyer, and one a peoples’ artist.” “Yes, they’re fine boys,” said the father, “but the son I’m really proud of is in the US.” “Oh, he’s an American?” “Yes indeed – he’s unemployed and get money from the government. Why, if it weren’t for the money he sends home we’d all be starving.”

These two illus. are used to introduce the idea of how warped peoples’ thinking about possessions can be!

Several years ago (11-6-02) Winona Ryder, a “bright and rising star” in the motion picture industry was convicted of two counts of grand larceny (felony) and vandalism. The gripping thing about all of this is the fact she had the money with which to pay for all of what she stole and then some.

What is wrong with our world? In short, it revolves around a materialistic mindset. Men, women and young people are accepting the lie that if you’re going to have an enjoyable life you better get all that can be gotten... Such worldly thinking is even seeping into the Lord’s church. The false god of materialism is dominating so many peoples’ lives and such is having a BIG affect upon the function of local churches.

Purpose: to view four ways we must use in overcoming materialism

These four ways are attitudes, thought processes, mindsets that are in total alignment with God’s principles:

I SEEK AFTER ETERNAL RICHES

- Illus. – Adam and I were going up the arch in St. Louis. An Englishman and his nephew were in the small pod with us... To be honest I wasn’t thinking a thing about the architecture...

A. Keep “Things” in Perspective

1. 1 Timothy 6:10-12 *“For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. But flee from these things, you man of God; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...”*
2. How we need to remind ourselves of these matters every day. Why? Because we’re surrounded by people who don’t hold these same values...
3. How then do we keep our perspective on eternal riches? 4 quick matters to ever keep before us:
 - a. worship God regularly (privately & corporately) – reminding ourselves who God is!
 - b. begin each day in devotion to God (study in Word... reaffirming our pledge to God as 1st...
 - c. cultivate friendships with brothers/sisters in Christ who hold like Biblical values...
 - d. avoid overexposure to materialism... learn to be content with what you have!

B. Keep Pursuing Humility

1. The pursuit of worldly riches breeds pride; however, the pursuit of spiritual riches invites humility
2. If you and I pursue righteousness as a daily course, we are much less likely to become arrogant and prideful regardless of our possessions.
3. Point: it is not wrong to be wealthy, but it is foolish to make worldly riches our life pursuit:
 - 1 Timothy 6:17 *“Command those who are rich in this world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”*

C. Keep the Masquerade at Bay

1. Earthly wealth is deceptive, pretending to be a source of “stability” when reality it is so unreliable. = e.g. inflation, government intervention, military vulnerability, even natural disasters...

2. Ecclesiastes 5:10 “*Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.*” – where’s the security in that?!
 - a. nobody knows what tomorrow will bring... layoffs, poor health, \$4.50 @ gallon gas...
 - b. Illus. – Sam Walton made millions the last few years of his life. He was reputed to be the 2nd wealthiest man in America at his death. When the stock market took a dive in Oct. 1987 Walton was informed he had lost one billion dollars in one day. His response? “It’s only money.”
3. C.S. Lewis wrote, “... it’s not wrong to desire our own good..., but we are far too easily pleased.”
 - a. i.e. it’s not that we lack ambition, but that our ambition is often misdirected – we’ve conditioned ourselves to settle for meager/short-lived pleasures causing our capacity for the eternal to shrivel...
 - b. this is why Christ calls us to set our affections on *things above* to *lay up treasures in heaven* to set our ambitions for that which has real significance in life!
4. Mark 8:36 “*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?*” I.e. instead of fighting to get to “the top” of the success ladder, “*fight the good fight of the faith...*”

II SEEK AFTER INTEGRITY

A. Money Often is a Temptation

1. Illus. – yrs ago, drug dealers approached captain of a ship that made trips from LA to So America. They offered him \$10,000 bring load of cocaine to LA. He refused. Approached again, this time \$50,000. Again the captain refused. Third time offered \$150,000. Said he would think about it; instead, called FBI. Put together a sting operation and caught a major drug ring. After incident, captain was asked, “Why did you wait till you were offered \$150,000 before calling us?” “They were getting close to my price, and it scared me.”
2. Money has and will be used by Satan to be a strong temptation to the detriment of our souls...
3. Must handle all financial affairs with honesty/integrity. If not envy/greed get the better us!

B. Character Does Matter

1. Need to decide character more important than financial status or self-esteem; otherwise lose all 3!
2. James 5:12 “...*Let your ‘Yes’ be yes, and your ‘No,’ no, or you will be condemned.*” I.e say what you mean and mean what you say! We need to promise God and ourselves to be honest/truthful!

III SEEK AFTER CONTENTMENT

A. Simple Memories are the Best

1. Illus. – yrs. ago asked by Dad/Mom to answer questionnaire as they prepared to speak at some seminar on raising kids... Remember them voicing surprise how all of us referred to our days in Wyoming... didn’t have a stitch of money... but it was a kid’s paradise...
2. Point: simple things in life are the real memories that stick out in our minds...
3. The older a person gets and the more one accumulates, harder it is to be content with the simple:
 - once you stay at the Hyatt, tough to like Motel 6... once drive really nice car hard to...
4. Let me ask: Who’s happier – the man with 6 children or the man with 6 million dollars? Answer: the man with six kids because man with 6 million wants more!
5. We need to learn the Bible makes clear the secret to happiness is not in having many things, but believing that what one has is enough!

B. Acknowledge Those Whom You Envy

1. When you begin to envy someone, do something for them... send a note of congratulations... compliment them genuinely... express your joy for their joy!
2. Being willing to *rejoice with those who rejoice* and you will share in the greater riches of fellowship rather than being shriveled up with envy!

C. Count Your Blessings

1. When we count our blessings, we can't help but be humbled by and grateful for God's goodness
2. Romans 8:32 *"He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him graciously give us all things?"*

IV SEEK AFTER REALITY

A. You Can't Take it With You

1. 1 Timothy 6:7 *"We brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it."*
2. Illus. – story of rich man determined to take it with him. Told his wife to put all his \$ in a sack and hang it in the attic. He said, "When I die and y spirit is caught up into heaven, I'll seize the sack on my way up!" He later died. Wife raced up to the attic, only to find the sack still there. She said, "I knew I should have put the sack in the basement!"
3. Fact is, we all will die physically and fact is we won't take a thing with us!

B. You Can Make it Work After You

1. World works hard accumulating things to impress people who in turn will resent them anyway.
2. Isn't there a better way? Isn't there something more realistic? Indeed – what really matters is whether we're ready to face God. Will He find us faithful, trustworthy stewards with that which He has entrusted us? And, who gets it when you're gone?!

Conclusion: Let me summarize and conclude this message by using the following illustration.

A marine pilot instructor and his student were in a "one lung training plane" (T34c). While flying at 3,000 feet over Pensacola, FL, they were dive-bombed by a kamikaze Turkey Buzzard. The big bird smashed through the windshield and struck both men in the head. When the instructor, Captain Dean Lucas, came to and looked through the blur of blood he assumed his student pilot was dead; so, he, the instructor, jumped with a parachute. The plane with its single occupant began to spiral toward the ground. At 1,200 feet, the student pilot came to and found himself assumed, abandoned and all alone! Now to make a long story short, keep in mind this student pilot had never soloed prior to this event. Anyway, with his face bleeding, a smashed collarbone, and dizzy with a concussion, the student pilot located the practice field Booton, FL and landed safely. Second Lieutenant Steve Honing was the student pilot who flew a plane before he wanted to do it. Steve Honing, though assumed, abandoned and left alone by his instructor was able to land that plane.

This illustrates well the parting words of our text. Our Instructor will assume nothing with us, He will not abandon us, and He will never leave us alone. You know what a financial genius is? A dad who can make more money than his family spends! Well, we can all overcome materialism in our lives by putting these four principles we found in this text and being confident God will never forsake us!